

Message Text

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SUBJ: AFRICAN MINISTERS OF CULTURE CONFERENCE

SUMMARY: END OF FIRST PLENARY NOTABLE FOR GROWING SPLIT BETWEEN ARABS AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICANS. ARABS INSISTED ON USING THEIR LANGUAGE EVEN THOUGH ONLY ENGLISH AND FRENCH OFFICIAL CONFERENCE LANGUAGES. HEAD OF SENEGAL DELEGATION CALLED FOR SEPARATE ARAB, BLACK AFRICAN CULTURAL CONFERENCES AND WAS MET WITH ANGRY RETORT FROM SUDANESE. THUS FAR, ONLY WEAK REFERENCES TO "ZIONISM" BY MAURITANIANS AND SUDANESE IN INTERVENTIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. FIRST PLENARY SESSION ITEM 6 "CULTURAL IDENTITY" ENDED WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON. HIGHLIGHT OF DEBATE IN WHICH ALL DELEGATIONS PARTICIPATED WAS GROWING OPENESS OF DISPUTE BETWEEN ARABS AND BLACK AFRICANS. ARABS INSISTED ON SPEAKING IN ARABIC EVEN THOUGH PREVIOUSLY AGREED THAT OFFICIAL LANGUAGES WOULD BE ENGLISH AND FRENCH. NO FACILITIES FOR TRANSLATION INTO ARABIC WERE AVAILABLE SO ARABS PREPARED TEXT IN ENGLISH AND FRENCH WHICH WAS READ BY INTERPETERS WHILE DELEGATE SPOKE

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IN ARABIC. SUDANESE, MAURITANIA, EGYPT SPOKE IN ARABIC,

ALGERIANS AND TUNISIANS STUCK TO FRENCH. ALGERIANS SPOKE EARLY IN DEBATE AND POLICY OF ARABS SPEAKING IN OWN TONGUE PROBABLY ARRIVED AT AFTER ALGERIAN INTERVENTION. SUB-SAHARA AFRICANS NOTICEABLY ANNOYED AT ARAB INSISTENCE SINCE THEY WERE CONTENT TO USE A SECOND LANGUAGE, I.E., ENGLISH OR FRENCH AND FELT ARABS SHOULD HAVE DONE LIKEWISE.

2. IN A LENGTHY AND SCHOLARLY INTERVENTION ALIOUNE SENE, SENEGAL, STRESSED UNIQUENESS BLACK AFRICAN CULTURE AND DISINCTNESS FROM THE ARAB-BERBER. SENE GAVE DISCOURSE ON DOCTRINE OF NEGRITUDE AND POINTEDLY SUGGESTED THAT UNESCO SHOULD SPONSOR A SPEARATE CULTURAL CONFERENCE FOR THE ARABS AND A SEPARATE CONFERENCE FOR BLACK AFRICANS. SENE A MOSLEM, GAVE ANALYTICAL TREATMENT TO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BLACK AFRICAN AND ARAB CULTURES.

3. SENE'S SPEECH PROVOKED ANGRY REACTION FROM DELEGATE FROM GUINEA WHO CONDEMNED CONCEPT OF NEGRITUDE AS DIVISIVE. HOWEVER, MAIN RETORT CAME FROM HEAD SUDAN DELEGATION AHMED ABDEL HALIM. HALIM HAD BEEN FIRST SPEAKER TO INSIST ON ARABIC AND IN HIS INITIAL INTERVENTION AND STRESSED ARAB-AFRICAN CULTURE, MAKING CLEAR DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN CULTURE, MAKING CLEAR DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN CULTURES OF NORTH AND SOUTH SUDAN. HE HAD STRESSED DIFFERENCES BUT ADVOCATED COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN ARAB AND BLACK AFRICAN CULTURE. IN HIS RESPONSE TO SENE, HALIM SPOKE IN ENGLISH AND ATTACHED THE SENEGALESE FOR ATTEMPTING TO DIVIDE AFRICA BY CALLING FOR SEPARATE CONFERENCES. SENE THEN ASKED FOR THE FLOOR AND REPEATED HIS CALL FOR A SEPARATE CONFERENCE. HE SAID HE WOULD INTRODUCE A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR UNESCO TO CONVENE SEPARATE CONFERENCES AT SOME FUTURE DATE AND STATED HE FELT A MAJORITY OF BLACK AFRICAN DELEGATES WOULD SUPPORT SUCH A MOTION.

3. COMMENT: THE SMOULDERING SPLIT BETWEEN THE ARABS AND SUB-SAHARAN AFRICANS SEEMS TO BE COMING MORE INTO THE OPEN. THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE SENEGALESE EXPRESSES THE FEELINGS OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICANS IS AS YET UNCLEAR. HOWEVER, SOMEWHAT WEAK ATTEMPTS BY MAURITANIAN AND SUDANESE IN THEIR INTERVENTIONS TO MAKE REFERENCE TO "ZIONISM" MET WITH STONY SILENCE AND DISTINCT LACK OF ENTHUSIASM. WHETHER ARABS WILL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ATTEMPT TO INTERJECT THIS ISSUE IS UNCERTAIN, BUT POSSIBLE. UNESCO SECRETARIATE IS MUCH OPPOSED TO POLITICAL ISSUES COMING INTO CONFERENCE AND CAN BE COUNTED UPON TO TRY AND BLOCK ANY SUCH EFFORT. AS TO ARAB-SUB-SAHARAN SPLIT SECRETARIATE IS REMAINING DISCREETLY NEUTRAL.
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